97-84171-14

Deane, Lucy

Women & children in factories, workshops...

London

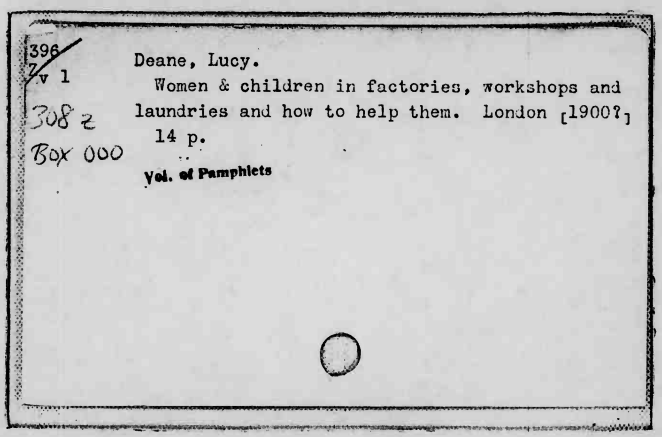
[1900?]

97-84171-14
MASTER NEGATIVE #

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION DIVISION

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET

ORIGINAL MATERIAL AS FILMED - EXISTING BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD



RESTRICTIONS ON USE: *Reproductions may not be made without permission from Columbia University Libraries.*

TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 10:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 8-28-97 INITIALS: PB

TRACKING # : MSH 26372

FILMED BY PRESERVATION RESOURCES, BETHLEHEM, PA.

B1002 Cult No 6
No. 2.

Industrial Law Committee
29, Great James St., Bedford Row, W.C.
Office hours 2.30 to 3.30.

INDUSTRIAL LAW COMMITTEE.

WOMEN & CHILDREN IN FACTORIES, WORKSHOPS, AND LAUNDRIES, AND HOW TO HELP THEM.

By
LUCY DEANE,
H.M. Inspector of Factories and Workshops.

LONDON:
Co-operative Printing Society Limited, Tudor St., New Bridge St., E.C
and at Manchester and Newcastle.

1d a qd per doz 1900?

A LECTURE

DELIVERED FOR THE

INDUSTRIAL LAW COMMITTEE.

I HAVE been asked to put before you as clearly as possible the scope and provisions of the law which exists for the protection, in certain respects, of the working women and children on whose behalf you are interested, and to whose good you devote your time and energies. I conclude that by you, who know these women and girls so well, who study their conditions and their needs, who encourage them to turn to you in their difficulties, by you who bravely help them to bear their burdens (and who realise often, I am sure, with a heartache, how far-reaching and complicated are the causes which make these burdens so heavy), any means by which your hands can be strengthened in your constant struggle against evil and evil conditions, are eagerly welcomed.

I have, not once nor twice, but often found it necessary to explain —alas! sometimes in vain—to kind and philanthropic women that their power of protecting the girls in whom they are interested, who come to their classes, from the long hours and constant overtime which are killing them, from the scanty or irregular mealtimes, the bad sanitary conditions of the places in which they spend almost their whole working time, is of enormous importance in their efforts to improve the physical and moral tone of these girls. But *here* I need not press this point. You know this as well as I do. You know that your very knowledge of, and sympathy with, these ignorant, or helpless, or demoralised beings lays upon you the responsibility of equipping yourselves to help them, to strengthen them against all the evil influences which surround them. You know that in claiming for them the protection to which they have a right by the law of the land you are not thereby encouraging a spirit of discontent, but that you are fulfilling a simple duty as law-abiding people, any failure in which is reprehensible on your part.

For you occupy a position differing from that of the casual by-stander. You are a body which exists entirely to bring help and enlightenment to the submerged or partially submerged. It is easy, therefore, to realise the necessity which you specially are under of learning to use any appliances designed for this purpose. For this reason, therefore, I have been asked to explain as shortly as possible

the scope and most prominent features of the law which regulates the conditions of employment in factories and workshops—a law which throws its protecting shield between defenceless women and children and the ever-present and manifold evils of a complicated industrial system.

From the year 1802, when a law dealing with the health and morals of apprentices was passed, a series of enactments on the subject of factory labour followed one another, till in 1878 they were all consolidated into the one Factory and Workshop Act, which forms the basis of the present law—a splendid charter, not only laying down the conditions of employment and of the premises in which the employment is pursued, but providing for and defining carefully the powers and duties of inspectors appointed to give the Act a practical value. Much of the early legislation was useless for want of means for enforcing its practical application. I have recently come from the International Congress at Brussels on Labour legislation, where the failure of those early laws to alleviate the misery of England's industrial workers was urged as a reason for abandoning this species of legislation. It was necessary to point out that the wisest law is useless if it is not steadily and consistently applied. I shall revert to this point again later on, for I am most anxious to press upon you that the public which is responsible for the making of these laws, is also mainly responsible for their enforcement; and that it rests with you to help by thoughtful study, or to retard by ignorance and indifference, the practical application of their benefits.

Since 1878 other extending or amending Acts have been added, the last being that of 1895. These Acts all apply to factories and workshops; and, before I go further, I will explain to you the distinction which is drawn between these two kinds of workplaces, for there is some difference in the application of law which relates to them.

The places regulated by this Act are defined as: "Any premises, room, or place in which mechanical power or manual labour is employed for purposes of gain in making, repairing, altering, finishing, ornamenting, or adapting for sale any article, or in any process incidental thereto." These places are then distinguished into two kinds: (1) Factories, which, broadly speaking, are those in which machinery moved by steam or other mechanical power is used in aid of the manufacturing or incidental processes; (2) workshops, where manual labour only is exercised, or where machines are not moved by steam or other mechanical power. A place in which sewing machines are driven by an engine would be a factory, while another in which they are worked by the feet or hands would be a workshop. There are, however, certain classes of places which are defined by the law to be factories whether mechanical power is employed or not. There is a special list of these in the Act, and they include: Tobacco works, potteries, lucifer-match works, bookbinding, and letterpress printing works. These are defined to be factories whether there is mechanical power or not.

Workshops, as I have already explained, are defined as any place, room, premises, etc., in which manual labour is exercised for gain in making or in any process incidental to the making, finishing, altering, repairing, or adapting for sale of any article. You will note that this definition covers *any* place in which these processes are carried on, and, therefore, a person who chooses to employ others to do this sort of thing in a bedroom or sitting-room immediately, of his or her own accord, turns the room into a workshop, and must not be surprised if it is treated as such by the law of the land. In the same way a person who has this kind of work done in a shop, for instance, a milliner's shop, turns the shop into a workshop. By a wise provision, it is the process carried on, and not the kind of place in which it is carried on, that constitutes a factory or workshop. Thus a workshop may be a tiny back bedroom in London where tailoring is done, or it may be half-an-acre of cinder-heaps on a black country moor where persons are employed sorting waste for sale.

Another mistaken idea occasionally met with is that, unless a given number of persons are employed, such places do not "come under the Act," as it is expressed. This is quite erroneous. There is no allusion made in the Act to the number employed in the definition of factories and workshops. You will see that by the section which defines employment *given that any process is carried on which constitutes a factory or a workshop*, then "a child, young person, or woman who works in such factory or workshop, whether for wages or not, either in a manufacturing process or handicraft, or in cleaning or oiling any part of the machinery, or in cleaning any part of the factory or workshop, or in any other kind of work incidental to or connected with the article or process, shall be deemed to be employed therein within the meaning of the Act," and is entitled, therefore, to protection. This section especially includes apprentices. You will readily see that it is only logical that *one* child or woman should have the protection which is needed, perhaps all the more because there is only one alone.

Workshops are divided into two kinds:—

1. The ordinary workshops, to which I have already alluded, in which one or more adults, young persons, and children are employed.

2. Domestic workshops, that is to say, a private house, or room, or place, where no mechanical power is used, and in which the only persons employed are members of the same family dwelling there. These are the subject of special regulations as regards hours of labour for children and young persons, and are exempted from many of the rules which apply to other workshops.

In every place in which these Acts apply (except domestic workshops) there is, or ought to be on pain of a penalty for neglect, a notice constantly hanging in some spot where it can be easily read by the workers. This notice contains a clear and comprehensive summary or abstract of the law as it relates to that place, so that everyone—both the employer and the workers—may know clearly

what the regulations are under which the work can be legally carried on.

I want to urge the immense importance of these notices. If you consider that in them is written down in the simplest and clearest manner all the regulations which are framed for the protection of the workers, you will realise their value. Where this notice hangs no excuse of ignorance can be pleaded by the occupier of the factory or workshop, who has the law written down before his eyes. The upper part of the notice is devoted to the particulars which apply especially to the place in which it is posted; the names and addresses of the officials whose business it is to see that the law is carried out; to prevent dispute the public clock by which the hours are regulated, the permissible period of employment, and the meal-times; the whole signed by the occupier in token of his responsibility.

In the lower part is a short summary of the Acts, divided into two groups.

For all the regulations for these two kinds of places—factories and workshops of all sorts—may be roughly arranged in two main divisions: (1) Those which relate to the nature of the place in which the work is carried on, and of the machinery among which it is done. These are intended to protect the health and safety of the workers, and are called the "sanitary and safety clauses" of the law. (2) Those which relate to the periods of employment and other conditions upon which women and children may be legally employed.

The first group of regulations applies to all who may be employed in factories and workshops, men, women, "young persons," and children. The second, with few exceptions, applies only to the employment of young persons, women, and children. A "young person" is a youth or girl under 18 and over 14 years of age. A child is a person under 14 years of age. No child may be employed under 11 years of age.

Sanitary Clauses.—Now, though the law in this matter is almost identical in factories and workshops, I want you to bear in mind that it is administered in these two different kinds of places by two different authorities, and is contained in two different Acts. At one time the workshops were, in these sanitary matters also, under the regulation of the Factory Department; but it was considered more convenient to hand the regulating of the sanitary matters in workshops over to the sanitary authority for the district, who administer the Public Health Act, in which there are clauses exactly identical with those in the Factory Act. But, though handed over in this manner, a control over them is still retained by the Home Office, for it is provided that when a factory inspector finds a sanitary defect in a workshop and sends notice thereof to the sanitary authority, should steps not be taken by them to have it remedied within one month, then the factory inspector may intervene and take those steps herself or himself. For the purposes

of these clauses steam laundries are classed as factories and hand laundries as workshops.

Here, then, are the sanitary provisions:—

First, *cleanliness*: "A factory and a workshop and a laundry shall be kept in a cleanly state, free from unwholesome smells arising from drains, and so forth."

When you realise that a number of persons are shut up between four walls day after day; that, in addition to all the exhalations given off, and organic impurities thus engendered, which cling to walls, and ceilings, and floors, there is all the dust, the vapours and fumes given out during the course of the various processes, all the inevitable accumulation of trade refuse and the dust stirred up by the constant traffic, passing and repassing of many feet, it is easy to understand that these places must, at least for health's sake, be frequently and properly cleansed and lime-washed. In order to secure this required cleanliness in factories and steam laundries, a special section provides that walls and ceilings of rooms, the walls of passages and staircases, must be limewashed, or, if they are painted, washed with hot water and soap every fourteen months.

The Public Health Act provides that unless a workshop or hand laundry is clean, it must be cleansed and limewashed forthwith on receipt of a notice from the sanitary authority under penalty of a fine.

Secondly, *overcrowding*: A factory or workshop or laundry shall not be overcrowded, and the standard—the same for factories and workshops—is given respecting this overcrowding, which prescribes that a minimum space of 250 cubic feet shall be provided for every occupant of a workplace. Medical and other authorities may smile at the smallness of this minimum, but that it exists at all is something, and the importance of enforcing it can hardly be overrated. A notice must be affixed on which is written the size of the room in cubic feet and the number of persons who may occupy it; so that it can be seen at a glance by anyone whether the place is overcrowded.

Thirdly, *ventilation*: "A factory or workshop or laundry shall be so ventilated as to render harmless, as far as practicable, all gases, vapours, dust, or other impurities, generated in the course of the manufacturing process that may be injurious to health." Want of ventilation is a thorny subject, and, if you read over this section carefully to yourselves, you may note that the wording of it is peculiar. Ventilation is, however, immensely important. *You* know how much anæmia and nervous diseases, respiratory diseases, indigestion, want of tone, and weakness may be attributed directly to this cause. Let me concede at once that those most prejudicially affected by lack of ventilation are often those most indifferent to it. There are few bad conditions to which apparently one can get so completely indifferent as stuffiness. Not that this makes it any the less unwholesome. But it is a sad fact that a girl whose whole person *proclaims* her physical need of good air is some-

times the very one who fails to note her deprivation of it. You are educating these, however; you are aware, even if *they* are not always so, of the danger of long hours spent in an atmosphere breathed and re-breathed and vitiated by the fumes from flaring gas-jets and from hot gas-irons. Before lending credence to the frequent assurance one receives that these poor girls *like* stuffy rooms and "stop up ventilation" and refuse to have the windows open, it is well to bear in mind two points: First, that they are often thinly clad, often badly nourished, and almost always tired; that they are, therefore, peculiarly susceptible to cold and draughts. And, secondly, that draughts are not ventilation. To ventilate a room by opening windows which give exactly on to their work-benches is to subject their shivering bodies to an avalanche of cold air. I always receive with much caution the assertion that working girls hate fresh air; for I find that it often means that they hate draughts; and so do I. But you will note the tired, listless, anæmic look which bespeaks long hours spent in bad air (and bad cold air is as injurious as bad hot air), and your inquiries will perhaps elicit useful facts in this connection. It may be said that it is easy for girls to ask for better ventilation; but bear in mind that, for good or for evil, women-workers are disinclined to ask for anything, for reasons to which I shall presently refer. A very short experience of workplaces shows that in many of these, owing to the exigencies of the trade, and partly to structural arrangements, it is impossible to attain the desired end by means of windows only, or ordinary ventilation. Accordingly, it has been provided that where an inspector finds that dust, fumes, gas, steam, or other impurities are generated to an injurious extent during the course of manufacture, and considers that a fan or other mechanical means of ventilation would remedy the matter, he may order this to be installed. Thus, in a variety of different works fans are used to carry off impurities. The necessity for these mechanical ventilators in laundries has been recognised, and the law specially prescribes that in *steam* laundries a fan or other means of proper construction shall be provided, maintained, and used for regulating temperature in every ironing room, and to carry off steam in every wash-house.

Fourthly, *sanitary conveniences:* "In every factory or workshop or laundry sufficient sanitary conveniences must be provided, separate for the use of the sexes." An important word is here omitted in the summary or extract. It exists, however, in the original section of the Factory Acts and of the Public Health Act, which regulates this matter. The section first appeared in the Factory Act of 1895, and only came into force two years ago therefore. It runs thus: "Every factory or workshop shall be provided with sufficient and suitable accommodation in the way of sanitary conveniences, having regard to the number of persons employed in, or in attendance at, the factory or workshop, and with proper separate accommodation for persons of each sex." No one who is even slightly acquainted with the conditions sometimes found in factories or workshops or laundries will

fail to realise the immense importance of this section and that of the word *suitable*;—the only one in the whole series of Acts which attempts to deal with or to give any standard of propriety and decency in the arrangement of these matters. For, with the exception of the requirement, perhaps doubtfully implied by this one word *suitable*, our English law (unlike many of the Continental factory laws) is singularly deficient in any regulations dealing with questions or conditions affecting the propriety of the arrangements or behaviour to be found in these large and closely-herded hives of labour. Those of you who watch over the tone and morals of young girls and children will do well to read the annual report of the women factory inspectors in this connection. Our experience, and it is a grave one, is that, as a general rule, where the arrangements are most unsuitable is where the women complain the least. Ponder this, and realise what it means in lowered tone and self-respect, and note the importance of this experience from the point of view of your own work. It is not until the standard begins to be raised from its lowest grades that one finds the sufferers begin to voice their trouble and claim the *right* which our law accords them.

Fifthly, *lavatories:* Suitable washing conveniences must be provided where poisonous substances are handled in either factories or workshops. This is a new and very useful section introduced into the last Factory Act. For instance, where girls are employed in rubbing poisonous metal dust into specially-prepared papers these washing places are imperative if the girls are not to run the risk of swallowing the poison at meal times.

Sixthly, *temperature:* Another new section provides that "adequate measures shall be taken to secure and maintain a reasonable temperature in workrooms." It is difficult to arrive at what constitutes a "reasonable temperature," but already much has been done under this section, vague as it is, and the girls who travel sometimes long distances in the winter to their work, arriving with soaked boots and damp clothing, need no longer sit in rooms destitute of any warming apparatus. The same section helps in hot gas-smelling atmospheres, where the temperature becomes abormally high as work progresses. The whole question of temperature in workrooms is mixed up inextricably with ventilation. Here, for instance, is an example: A workshop was visited one foggy winter morning by an inspector. The place was bitterly cold. There was no fireplace nor stove nor steam pipes, and the girls sat with blue fingers huddled in their little capes or shawls for warmth. The attention of the occupier was called, and quite rightly, by the inspector to the lack of warming apparatus, and he was instructed about the requirements of the law. That same evening the room was visited again. The windows had been shut, of course, all day. The plan was resorted to—which is not uncommon—of warming the room by the breath and bodies of the workers. The winter day, and dark, winter afternoon and evening had necessitated the use of gas-lights, which had been flaring all day, and consequently when the door was opened the rush of

fiercely hot air caught at one's throat like a living thing. The atmosphere was indescribably stuffy, and the heat so oppressive that the women sat in evident discomfort. The tired, listless attitudes and weary, dull eyes testified to the vitiated condition of the air they were breathing. Here is a case where want of warming apparatus and want of ventilation produced extremes of heat and cold and, in both cases, bad air.

By the wording of the Act, all "sanitary provisions" are made to apply to laundries, and on whether this regulation *re* temperature is regarded as a "sanitary provision" or not, depends whether this clause applies equally to laundries.

Another section protecting the general public and customers, at least as much as the workers, imposes a penalty upon employers or contractors who permit wearing apparel to be made, repaired, or cleaned in houses where scarlet fever or smallpox exists.

Special and careful regulations exist guarding against accidents due to dangerous machinery, dangerous structures, fire, or poison. On the former I have not time to enlarge to-night, but I want to draw your attention to a section in the new Act which prescribes that medical practitioners who come across cases of lead, phosphorus, or arsenical poison, or anthrax contracted in a factory or workshop, must report the same to the Chief Inspector of Factories at the Home Office. Failure to notify renders a doctor liable to a penalty, while a small fee is paid for the notification. I may instance the pottery trade and certain print and colouring works as industries in which lead poisoning occurs, while phosphorus used by match-makers may produce that terrible disease of necrosis of the jawbone. Certain colouring powders contain arsenic, and anthrax is a very dangerous blood-disease occurring among those employed in places where uncleaned horsehair or bristles are handled or wool is sorted.

In every factory or workshop there must be sufficient means of escape in case of fire. The inspector may also apply for a magistrate's order requiring the provision of a fire-escape.

Doors must not be so locked or latched that they cannot be easily and immediately opened from the inside, and, in every factory built after 1895, the doors must be made to open outwards. Remembering the inflammable materials often worked with, the quantity of artificial light used, and the narrow exits, it is easy to see the importance of these safeguards in the event of a rush of panic-stricken girls.

Finally, there are three special regulations, one of which I have already referred to, which apply to *steam* laundries.

First, that which prescribes that a fan or other means of proper construction shall be provided for regulating the temperature in ironing rooms, and for carrying away the steam in wash-houses.

Secondly, that stoves for heating irons shall be sufficiently separated from any ironing-room, and gas-irons emitting noxious fumes shall not be used.

Thirdly, that the ground shall be kept in good condition and properly drained.

All the sanitary regulations of the 1875 Acts are applied to laundries, as well as to factories and workshops. We now, however, come to *the second great group*, and this has *not* been made to apply to laundries. I will explain its main features and then dwell on the regulations regarding laundries specially.

The *second great group of regulations* includes such matters as the "period of employment," holidays, education of children employed in factories, various exemptions and special arrangements in cases of Jew employers and workers, fitness of young persons and children to be employed, and the notices and registers which the employer must keep in accordance with law.

This group of regulations applies only to children, young persons, and women.

I have already quoted to you the definition of "employment." You will observe, however, that there are three cases in which these clauses regarding employment do not apply: First, the process of gutting, salting, and packing fish immediately on its arrival in the fishing boats; secondly, the sole purpose of repairing the premises or machinery; thirdly, the process of cleaning and preparing fruit between June and September, in so far as this is necessary to prevent it from spoiling.

The Act of 1878, which dealt only with factories and workshops, *not* with laundries, lays down the broad and simple regulation that the working day of twelve hours shall be taken either between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., or 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., with, in textile factories, two hours out for meals, and in non-textile factories and workshops one and a-half hours for meals, one hour of which must be taken before 3 o'clock. The "spell" of work must not be more than five hours long without half-an-hour for a meal, and the occupier must settle definitely how he desires to work, and write it down on his notice, and not go beyond it. Thus you get clear and definite periods of employment, and inspection and administration is rendered possible and effectual.

(In the making of straw hats the hours may be taken between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. In this case there must be no overtime.)

Now, when this principle of definite limits within which work may be carried on was introduced, there was quite an uproar. All manner of terrible things were predicted. There was scarcely a trade in the land which did not declare that it was a peculiar and special industry, and that regulations which might apply beneficially to everyone else could not but be perfectly destructive when applied to that particular trade. It is interesting to read the history of that time.

Thus we find the sail manufactures (a textile trade) protesting that if their period of employment was confined within such limits all the fishing industry and the mercantiie marine would be seriously crippled, if not destroyed, for they would be unable to make the sails needed in a hurry when a storm had destroyed

many of those in use! No such dire result, however, has followed the change.

Again, it was said that in the great textile industries the labour of women would be superseded by that of men who were subject to no such legal protection. So far from this being the effect, however, it was found that the mills which formerly worked "all the hours that God made" closed regularly at the end of the legal period, for it was not worth while to keep the men working after the women had gone, thus the direct benefit to the women proved indirectly a benefit to the men.

Overtime is permitted in certain trades only under certain special conditions and for certain definite reasons, and is strictly limited in amount. A list of these trades is contained in the schedule to the Act. The clothing trade is one of them. Overtime may be worked 30 times in the year, not more than two hours at a time, nor more than three days in any one week. No overtime may be worked unless notice is posted to the inspector and posted up in the workroom. Four hundred cubic feet of space must also be allowed for each worker during overtime. Thus a room which in the daytime may contain eight occupants may contain only five during overtime. It is easy to understand the necessity for this regulation in the case of tired women remaining in the gas-laden atmosphere to work after the normal period.

If two hours' overtime are worked, an extra half-hour must be allowed for meals. No overtime may be worked on Saturdays or on the short day substituted for Saturday. No young persons may be employed overtime. There is an exception to this in the case of lads in certain trades, but, as these are not likely to come under your notice, it will be safer for you to lay it down as a general rule that only adult women may be employed overtime.

People speak glibly of overtime as if it were a very little matter. I should like you to try and realise what is meant by normal time. Take the case of a dressmaker employed from 8 in the morning till 8 in the evening, and try to understand what it really means. When you are awakened in the morning for your cup of tea this woman is already sitting in her workroom. She has to rise at 6-30 or 7 in order to accomplish, first, the household duties, and then the long walk or 'bus ride from the place where her lodgings are to the more expensive localities in which her workshop is situated. Through your varied morning avocations, plans, breakfast, walk, and shopping she still sits on. Through the busy afternoon, your calls, your drive, your meeting with friends, your varied duties, the woman is still sitting in the same chair, in the same room, bent over the same kind of work, and if it is a late order, all through dinner-time and the restful pause afterwards, imagine the same figure still there, and realise that at the time you are woken to-morrow she will be there again, and so on day after day. It is often 9 at night before she reaches home after her normal work-day. Her half-holiday does not release her until 4 o'clock. When she reaches her lodgings it is 5 (that is to say, in winter, after dark) before she can change her working dress and start

forth in search of the refreshment which comes of variety. Have you tried sitting in one position from 8 in the morning till 8 in the evening, with only two short breaks, your whole soul bent on turning the handle of a screw press, or on tying knots in string, or on putting a needle in and pulling it out again as often as your physical strength permits? These are considerations it is well to remember when trying to realise the conditions of work in factories and workshops.

Laundries.—Laundries are not classed as factories and workshops exactly, and the workers in them are not protected to the same extent as those in the other places under the Act. The sanitary and safety provisions, however, apply to laundries, but instead of having the hours confined within certain fixed limits out of the 24, the regulation runs like this: "Women may not be employed more than fourteen hours out of the 24, nor more than 60 in the week; young persons twelve hours out of the 24 and 60 in the week; children not more than ten hours out of the 24 and 30 hours in the week, *exclusive of mealtimes and absences from work.* They may not be employed for longer than a spell of five hours without half-an-hour for a meal.

Children and young persons may not be employed overtime, but women may be employed overtime on the same conditions as in factories and workshops, though the total period of actual work must not exceed fourteen hours in any one day. Workers in laundries must have the same holidays as those in factories and workshops, but there need be no "short day" in the week.

All complaints as to long hours in laundries will receive attention, but a little study of the law will show you that its enforcement in laundries is a much less simple and straightforward matter than it is in other places.

I cannot close without alluding to a series of acts which are administered by the factory inspectors in factories and workshops, laundries, and places from which work is given out, and which are known as the *Truck Acts.* Of these, the one to which I desire to call your attention, and a copy of which you will do well to buy, is the Truck Act of 1896. I remember a lady who had visited for some time amongst working women and girls, and who was speaking to me about the difficulty experienced by many of them in living upon their wages. Pointing to a pale-looking woman, she said: "This one, now, earns a comparatively good sum. She makes 10s. or even 12s. a week at tailoring." I asked: "Do you mean real or nominal earnings?" She looked puzzled, and said, "Oh! but she is a piece-worker, you know, at so much a dozen, and she tells me she can finish so many dozen in a week, which means that, at the rate of pay she receives, she can earn 11s. or 12s. a week." "I only wanted to know," I replied, "whether this sum represents her actual earnings or whether she has to deduct from it the cost of her needles, thread, cotton, silk, sweeping of the room, and so forth." I found on questioning the girl that these items amounted to 1s., or even 2s. a week; her

actual earnings, therefore, were only 9s. or 10s. It was the first time that such a thing was realised by the lady visitor, and in the light of that knowledge she went home and studied the little booklet called "The Truck Act of 1896."

I have tried to put before you, as simply as I can, some of the main provisions of the law which regulates the conditions of employment in factories and workshops. I do not for an instant contend that it is complete or perfect, but as far as it goes it is a charter of safety and protection for thousands of toilers *in so far as it is applied*; and here lies the whole root of the matter. This law is only of practical use when efficiently and steadily applied, and, as I remarked at the beginning, it rests very largely with yourselves to ensure this. In an ideal State I suppose that women would lay hold of and claim for themselves the protection that the State has accorded them; but practically this is out of the question. The woman who has most to complain of often complains least. This, I think, may be taken as an axiom, not applicable to factory workers only, but in their case very strikingly exemplified, and, as one learns to know them better, the reasons for this become quite obvious. Down in the arena of the East End of London (the West End would do equally well as an example), or the distant outworkers' village in far Donegal, where the struggle of the unskilled worker is fierce, where cheap labour is the demand on one side and a wage, though only a starvation one, the answering cry on the other; where every employed woman is haunted by an unemployed "double" ready to take her place if she faints or drops aside, the fortunate woman is the one who has work, and this fact is being continually pressed upon her that "if she doesn't take her work she may leave it," and she becomes gradually less and less critical, chary of uttering a word of complaint, not even in her own mind acknowledging her need of the protection which her country's rulers accord her, terrified lest by appealing to the laws and the justice which the community has provided for her, she should risk her power to struggle on in the fierce life-and-death scramble. What shall we say of the philanthropic person who, by her want of thought and want of knowledge, by her failure to treat her philanthropic work as she would her business, namely, as a thing requiring all the skill and the knowledge she can bring to bear upon it, helps to perpetuate this condition of things? If in your effort to roll back the tide of evil you desire to claim the assistance which these laws afford you, you must yourselves take the initiative, make yourselves acquainted with this life-saving appliance, and use it as it was intended to be applied by law-abiding people, who realise that the breaking of these laws entails not only suffering on women and children, but lays an injustice on those employers who set themselves to comply with them, and while doing so have to compete with others less scrupulous than themselves.

L. D.

END OF
TITLE